



For almost as long as photography has existed, critics and scholars have sought to locate its meaning in and around the medium's two poles of indexicality: the subjective inner world of the photographer who releases her camera's shutter and the objective outer world that lies before her lens.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, our infatuation with these two indices and the supposed ease of photographs' reproducibility has obscured our understanding of the labor that goes into making prints.<sup>2</sup> When Weimar cultural critic Walter Benjamin wrote that "for the first time, photography freed the hand from the most important artistic tasks in the process of pictorial reproduction—tasks that now devolved upon the eye alone," he was not thinking about the tacit knowledge required to physically develop and construct an image in the darkroom.<sup>3</sup> Like the generations of cultural theorists and photo historians who followed, Benjamin was interested in the politics of the reproducibility of images, not in the intricate processes of their physical reproduction.<sup>4</sup>

In a period of renewed Benjaminian anxiety over the loss of an object's "aura," the work of Schneider/Erdman, Inc., recalls a discussion by the same cultural theorist that is less-cited in the history of photography: namely, his consideration of the task of the translator.<sup>5</sup> Published in 1923 as a foreword to his own translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*, Benjamin's essay on the translator's task addresses numerous issues fundamental to printing and provides an inroad into considering the role of the printer with more nuance than has historically been the case. When we acknowledge the difficulty of printing and look at how meaning is built in the darkroom—through subtle changes in tone, the intensification of contrasts, or the delicate introduction and control of highlights, among other effects—our notions about the mechanical ease of making a photograph fall away to reveal the complexities of its language. In an age of technological reproduction, the images discussed here may be infinitely reproducible, but are they translatable?

Through two case studies—an animal portrait that Schneider printed at Peter Hujar's behest in the last months of his life and a politically astute series of photographs David Wojnarowicz montaged in Hujar's darkroom following his death—this essay explores the labor of printing as an enigmatic form of translation.<sup>6</sup> The first case study focuses on two printer's proofs of Hujar's *Will*: one in gelatin silver editioned during the artist's lifetime, the other posthumously made in pigmented ink. In addition to

providing an opportunity to consider the shift from analog to digital printing more broadly, these two prints (both in the Harvard Art Museums collections) afford a compelling discussion of how an artist's visual syntax and aesthetic intent can be partially recuperated and translated across media. Highlighting the radicality of Benjamin's claim that a translation can never be totally faithful to its original, these two prints make manifest the enormity of Schneider's task in the face of both material and personal loss.

Exemplifying a different mode of translation, this essay's second case study delves even further into the consideration of intent—something which, after Hujar's death and his own AIDS diagnosis, Wojnarowicz fervently directed into everything he made. In my consideration of a single print from Wojnarowicz's *Sex Series*, Benjamin's writing on the translator's precarious balance between freedom and fidelity to the text is paired with the artist's own resolve to reveal political truths and his adamant defense of, and control over, his works' meanings. By placing the lab and Schneider's relationship with these two artists at the center of my discussion, I aim to show how our understanding of a print can be enriched through close consideration of a photograph's materiality and the intricate processes of its printing. Ultimately at stake, I argue, is our understanding of translation as both a multifaceted task that encompasses a range of modes and an endeavor that can be instrumentalized toward affective and political ends.

From the Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection in general and the following two case studies in particular emerge questions regarding not only the histories and processes of making—of "dragging prints through chemistry," as Schneider would say—but of photography's material and cultural histories in a vibrant New York scene that was slowly, though not quietly, being decimated. Made during the height of America's AIDS epidemic, Hujar's *Will* and Wojnarowicz's *Sex Series* chronicle the parallel losses of photographic media and two of the era's most influential artists.<sup>7</sup> As black and white photographic papers went out of production, as singular works were sold, and as these artists slipped into the depths of their illnesses, the task of printing their work became laden with aesthetic and political significance. Propelling these prints' affective histories is their sharp sense of urgency in a period harrowed by catastrophe, an urgency that was echoed by Schneider and Erdman's ardent processes of remembering, repeating, and working through in their lab.<sup>8</sup>

Fig. 1  
Peter Hujar, *Seated Self-Portrait  
Depressed*, 1980. Pigmented ink print,  
50.8 × 40.6 cm (20 × 16 in.). Harvard Art  
Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/  
Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, par-  
tial gift, and partial purchase through  
the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.156.

## PETER HUJAR, *WILL*

Schneider was first introduced to Hujar by Erdman in 1977, while working for Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theater. After completing his B.F.A. at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town that same year, Schneider returned to New York and began his graduate studies at the Pratt Institute in 1978. It was during this later period that he and Hujar became close friends, bonding, in part, over the medium of photography. Hujar's influence on Schneider and his work as a printer cannot be overstated. The older photographer not only got Schneider his first job in a commercial photo lab but adamantly encouraged him and Erdman to open their own printing business, which they eventually did in a loft on Cooper Square. Along with Lisette Model, Schneider credits Hujar with teaching him how to interpret prints.<sup>9</sup> Though the two men never printed alongside one another in the darkroom, their visits to photography exhibitions and conversations about how prints functioned helped shape both Schneider's eye and his practice as a printer. As a testament to Hujar's capacity as a mentor, both Schneider and Wojnarowicz have written that it was he who taught them how to see.<sup>10</sup> Although Schneider processed all of Hujar's film early on in their friendship, he began printing for him only in 1987, after the artist had been diagnosed with HIV.

The Harvard Art Museums' Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection includes 54 photographs by Hujar, all of which were printed in the lab between 1987 and 2014. Offering a survey of Hujar's photographic practice as seen through a diverse range of landscapes and portraiture, the collection encapsulates the photographer's aesthetic, emblemized in his recurring center-framed, square-formatted images of isolated and meticulously lit subjects. Formal similarities across Hujar's portraiture gesture toward his discerning consideration of the beauty and frailty of life—seen, for example, in the compositional and tonal affinity shared between his raking depiction of himself seated nude in his sparse loft (Fig. 1) and his similarly concentrated, beautifully tragic portrait of a cow intended for slaughter (Fig. 2).<sup>11</sup> From his intimate portrait of Candy Darling on her deathbed surrounded by blooming chrysanthemums and wilting roses (Fig. 3) to his photograph of a goat balancing on the edge of the discarded tractor tire to which she is chained (Fig. 4), Hujar was able to draw attention to his sitters' idiosyncrasies while imaging their broader conditions as beings. Referring to a portrait of a goose coily turning to address Hujar's lens (Fig. 5), Hripsimé Visser has noted the photographer's ability to capture his subjects' distinct sensibilities, suggesting that even this domesticated fowl “seems to be conscious of [her] pose in the same way as a mannered transvestite.”<sup>12</sup> “Just like people,” Visser continues, Hujar's “animals are *alone* in an existential

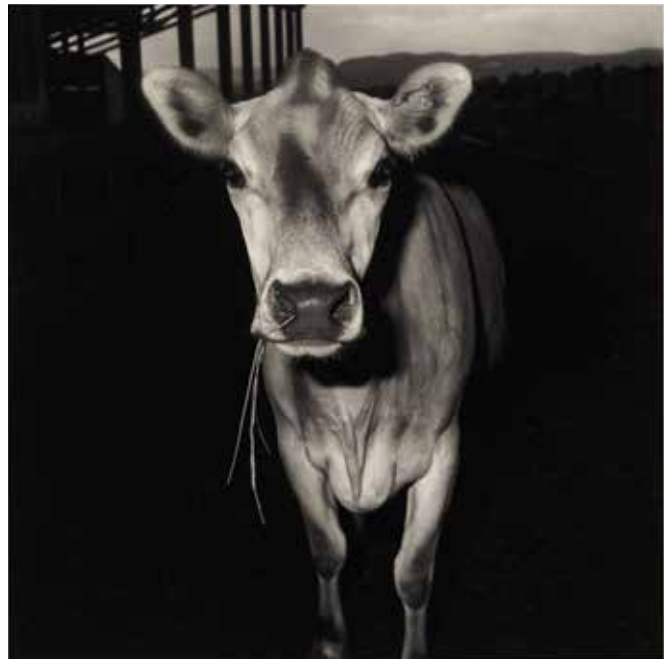


Fig. 2  
Peter Hujar, *Cow with Straw in Its Mouth*, 1978. Pigmented ink print, 50.8 × 40.6 cm (20 × 16 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2011.276.

Fig. 3  
Peter Hujar, *Candy Darling on Her Deathbed*, 1973. Pigmented ink print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.173.



Fig. 4  
Peter Hujar, *Goat, Hyrkin Farm, Westtown, NY*, 1978. Pigmented ink print, 50.8 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2011.275.



Fig. 5  
Peter Hujar, *Goose with Bent Neck*, 1981. Pigmented ink print, 50.8 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2011.278.

sense," each bearing "the weight of the same tragic and irrevocable mortality as [his] human sitters."<sup>13</sup>

Harvard's gelatin silver printer's proof of *Will* is among the last prints that Schneider made for Hujar before his death from AIDS-related pneumonia in November 1987 (Fig. 6).<sup>14</sup> For his portrait, Will poses regally on a cushion whose fabric echoes his own rolling flesh. Locking his two front legs straight, he turns his head slightly to the right, sweetly bearing his soft chest to Hujar and, by proxy, to us. The photograph is a poignant one, printed specifically by Schneider at Hujar's request for an edition intended as gifts for those who had taken care of him during his illness. Considered alongside a pigmented ink printer's proof of this same portrait made more than 20 years later, the collection's two prints of this image embody histories of material and personal loss that emerge when we consider their making as distinct modes of translation.

In his essay "The Task of the Translator," Benjamin writes that translation is a procedure that can best be understood by returning to the original.<sup>15</sup> However, in a medium for which "to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense," the task of returning to an "original" is both materially and theoretically complex.<sup>16</sup> Because the notion of a single, original version of an image neither concerned nor existed for Hujar, printing for him was not about getting back to or reconstructing an earlier and therefore somehow more "authentic" print.<sup>17</sup> In the artist's own practice, creating a print was about communicating an idea, about producing a work that *meant* in a particular way and that would contribute to a yet-to-be-discerned collective aesthetic spanning several generations or versions of an image. Hujar's concern when printing his own work was not that each of his prints perfectly match one another (an impossibility given the contingencies of the darkroom), but rather that each be capable of functioning on the wall.<sup>18</sup> For Hujar, each interpretation or variation of a print got nearer to or supplemented his intention for his image (an issue we will return to in greater detail later). In a medium in which "to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense," the artist's own conception of his prints' relationship both to the shared negative from which they were made and to each other collectively is exceptionally fitting.<sup>19</sup> Rather than viewing the negative as holding the original image or pointing to the first edition of prints made from it as being the most "authentic" of its versions, it is more generative (and more accurate) to consider Hujar's "original" in a broader way and to see Schneider's return to it as a dual operation of sorts—one that, in this instance, necessarily pairs a tangible film negative with the photographer's more intangible intent.

Just as a translator of poetry seeks to mobilize a poem's imaginative sense through a play with syntax, a printer works to mobilize a photographer's aesthetic intent in the darkroom through a play with tonality. The negative

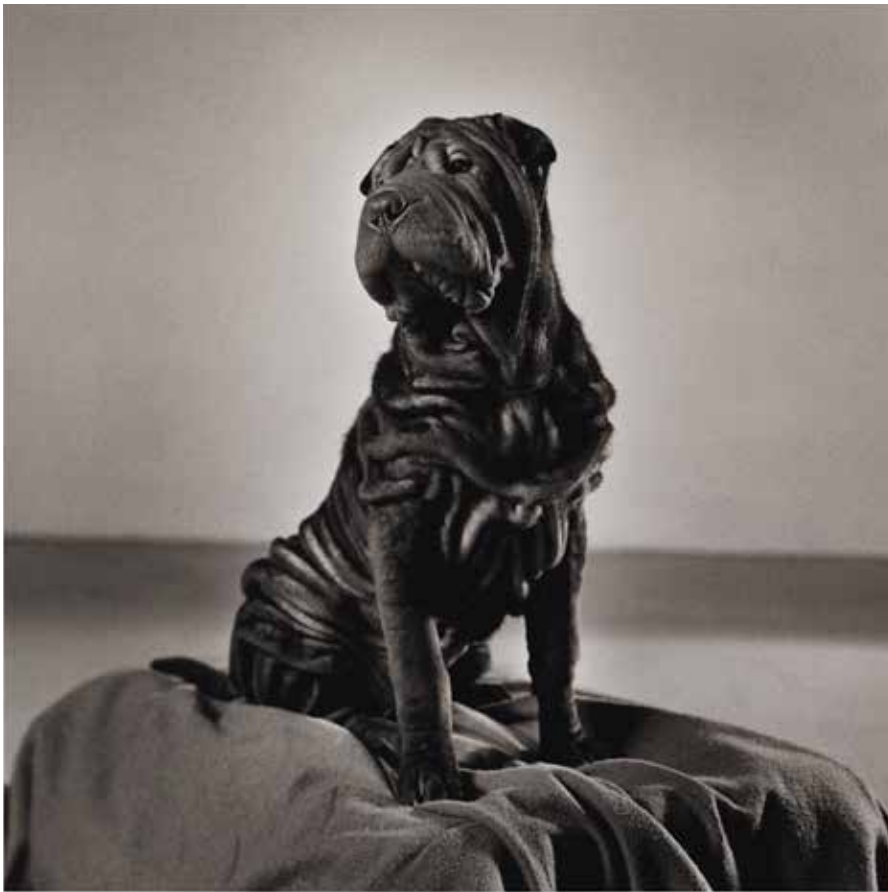


Fig. 6  
Peter Hujar, *Will*, 1985. Gelatin silver print, 50.8 × 40.6 cm (20 × 16 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.176.

may provide the image's content, but it is the complex labor in the lab that largely shapes and contributes to its meaning.<sup>20</sup> Although Hujar carefully constructed his photographs through his lens, conscientiously lighting his subjects and shifting his focus to coerce subtle details to emerge, he also heavily manipulated his prints in the darkroom. In the process of printing his own work, the artist deliberately selected photographic papers and toners, working in his darkroom to craft his images with light. Rarely, if ever, did Hujar make a straight print from a negative. Even in a seemingly more straightforward image, such as his portrait of his dog, *Will*, the slight glow around the animal's body needed to be built through a delicate combination of dodging the figure (selectively holding back light to make the print lighter) and burning-in the background (selectively making areas darker by adding more light to the print).<sup>21</sup> When Schneider began printing for Hujar following the artist's diagnosis, he was tasked not with producing a strict, literal translation of the image Hujar had captured in his film's light-sensitive emulsion, but with creating a print that marshaled his mentor's intention for the work. Editioning *Will* in collaboration with Hujar, Schneider has said, forced him to reinterpret how the photographer would have printed

this image himself—in other words, to reverse engineer Hujar's particular process of making and to reconstruct his performance in the darkroom.

To arrive at the gelatin silver printer's proof of *Will*, Schneider began by making a number of variations of the image from Hujar's negative. Through toning, masking, burning, and dodging, he worked in the darkroom to carefully build a print that echoed the artist's vision for the portrait. After discussing different versions of the image together, Hujar would make recommendations for adjustments, which Schneider implemented upon returning to the darkroom. This physical and conceptual back and forth between Hujar's loft on 189 Second Avenue and the Schneider/Erdman lab on Cooper Square was integral to the collaborative process and emblematic of Schneider's procedure as a printer. His task, he has often stated, was not to mechanically reproduce a photograph, but to distill its maker's conception of it. While one print may have had the delicate highlights Hujar wanted, another version may have more effectively encapsulated the range of tones or particular details he felt were necessary for the work to produce meaning. Schneider's role was to merge these desired attributes, which appeared across a number of prints, into a work that Hujar felt aligned

with or complemented his interpretation of the image. Through this collaborative practice, Schneider was able to materially manifest Hujar's intention—his sense of how the image should function on the wall—for this last (and only) silver lifetime edition of *Will*.

Printed on Agfa Portriga Rapid, a now discontinued, fiber-based black and white paper known for its warm tones, this gelatin silver portrait of *Will* is important within the printer's proof collection not only because of its affective history, but because of its materiality. The year Hujar passed away, Agfa-Gevaert was in the midst of reformulating the artist's beloved chlorobromide paper, removing from its emulsion (at the behest of the EPA) the environmentally destructive amounts of cadmium that had given the paper what Schneider has referred to as its "exceptionally eccentric" qualities.<sup>22</sup> Because Portriga was Hujar's printing paper of choice, Schneider pulled from his own cache of the pre-cadmium-leached material for this sole silver edition of Hujar's animal portrait, creating prints that embodied the parallel loss of both a medium and a mentor.

Though Schneider had started printing for Hujar immediately after the artist was diagnosed with HIV, he did not begin working on this edition of *Will* until Hujar was far along in his illness. In recalling how they made this gelatin silver printer's proof, Schneider and Erdman described bringing the print to the artist in his loft after he had become bedridden. It is here, at Hujar's own figurative deathbed, where Benjamin's ideas about the life of the original and Hujar's conception of the shifting life of an image become imperative to our consideration of these two printer's proofs.

In his essay, Benjamin writes that a successful translation issues not so much from the original's life, but from its afterlife.<sup>23</sup> While successful translations mobilize their original in part by de-canonizing it and showing its instability, they also give their original a new life by allowing it to attain, through them, an "ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering."<sup>24</sup> When considering the printer's proof collection's two versions of this portrait—the gelatin silver print Hujar approved to be editioned in the last weeks of his life and the pigmented ink print Schneider made for Hujar's estate two decades later—the notion of the translator's task as being intimately tied to the establishment of an afterlife for a work (and its creator) becomes ever-more poignant. Creating the gelatin silver printer's proof of *Will* was marked by an urgency to catalyze Hujar's intent before his death and the discontinuation of his preferred medium; posthumously printing his work in pigmented ink was marked by the desire to galvanize the photographer's legacy.

Relying on extant works printed by Hujar and other interpretations of his images, Schneider has spent over two decades working to translate the vision of his deceased friend and teacher.<sup>25</sup> Initially hoping

to posthumously print Hujar's work in gelatin silver, Schneider struggled for a year to find alternatives to Portriga Rapid. Like many photographers, Hujar's aesthetic, and his choice in papers, developers, and toners, changed over the course of his career. After printing on Ilford Galerie for years, Hujar abandoned it for Portriga, preferring the chlorobromide paper for both the wide range of warm tonalities it could produce and the peculiar details it could bring out in his images' shadows.<sup>26</sup> While Hujar's move from Ilford Galerie to Agfa Portriga Rapid resulted from a shift in the artist's own aesthetic disposition, Schneider's task of rethinking the possibilities of commercially available materials in the wake of Portriga's reformulation followed from necessity.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the 1980s and '90s, photo companies continually altered their black and white photographic papers, decreasing the silver content in their emulsions and changing their papers' weights, textures, and surface sheens. In the face of this material instability, Schneider became tasked with rethinking Hujar's images based on the availability of silver papers and the particular aesthetics they were capable of rendering. Though often overshadowed in scholarship by the primacy of the subject matter depicted, a photograph's material support is equally important to the image and can drastically change the look and feel of a print.<sup>28</sup> Paired with the paper's early high-silver and cadmium-loaded emulsion, Agfa Portriga Rapid's creamy, double-weight fiber base worked—especially with selenium toner—to create images markedly different from other photographic papers on the market at this time. The Harvard collection's printer's proofs of Model's *Fashion Show*, *Hotel Pierre* (Fig. 7) and Richard Avedon's *Suzy Parker and Mike Nichols*, *coat by Saint Laurent*, *The American Hospital*, *Paris, August 1962* (Fig. 8), for example, epitomize the particularly cool tones and graphic qualities that their (and Hujar's earlier) paper, Ilford Galerie, could manifest.<sup>29</sup> Though favored by many photographers who vied for stark graphic contrasts in their work, the majority of black and white printing papers manufactured during this period afforded an aesthetic almost antithetical to the one needed to translate Hujar's works following Portriga's demise.

Creating proofs using a variety of papers, including Ilford Multigrade FB Warmtone Paper, Schneider slowly discovered that none of the commercially available substrates were capable of reproducing Portriga's signature warm tonalities.<sup>30</sup> Having lost the physical ability to translate Hujar's particular syntax—his muddy warm tones shot-through with graphic blacks and brittle highlights—into silver, Schneider was forced to, as Benjamin puts it, "[come] to terms with the foreignness of languages [to each other]."<sup>31</sup> In other words, Schneider had to concede the impossibility of using commercially available black and white photographic papers to replicate Portriga's



Fig. 7  
 Lisette Model, *Fashion Show, Hotel Pierre*, 1940–46. Gelatin silver print, 39 x 49 cm (15 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 19 $\frac{1}{16}$  in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2011.381.

aesthetic and instead acknowledge the newfound range of tonalities afforded by pigmented ink and inkjet paper (specifically, Harman by Hahnemühle Gloss Baryta).<sup>32</sup> In 2009, after countless attempts to find a substitute paper or other means through which he could encapsulate Hujar's vision, Schneider reached the conclusion that printing in pigmented ink was the only way he could emulate Hujar's particular tonal range. And here the difference between *emulation* and *simulation* is key, as the task of the translator is not to replicate a work in a target language but to craft its echo.

In his essay, Benjamin writes that the task of translation is complex, not least because it calls into question the relationship between freedom and fidelity—a successful translation, we are told, rests in the tension between these two seemingly competing ends. According to Benjamin, “[T]he task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language into which he is translating that produces in it the echo of the original.”<sup>33</sup> Benjamin offers a helpful example to illustrate: he likens the relationship between a translation and its original to pottery sherds, which, though they “must match one another in the smallest details” when being glued together, need not be alike.<sup>34</sup> Comprised of numerous unlike but interrelated sherds, the completed vessel represents the “utopian model of the poem which exists silently beyond all translated versions,” or what Benjamin refers to somewhat philosophically as “pure language.”<sup>35</sup> For our purposes, Benjamin's vessel is symbolic of Hujar's



Fig. 8  
Richard Avedon, *Suzy Parker and Mike Nichols, coat by Saint Laurent, The American Hospital, Paris, August 1962*, 1962. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2011.113.

ultimate interpretation of his image, the “utopian model of the [print]” that both Hujar and Schneider aimed to get nearer to actualizing in their practice. In translating Hujar’s *Will* into pigmented ink, Schneider’s task was not simply to simulate an earlier version of this portrait in a new medium and language, but to distill and disarticulate Hujar’s aesthetic, moving his interpretation of the image nearer to its ideal form.<sup>36</sup>

Faced with an inability to rehabilitate the aesthetic through which Hujar had created meaning following the reformulation of his cherished chlorobromide paper, Schneider moved past the hand-wringing common on the gallery circuit to pursue Hujar’s aesthetic sense at the cost, some might argue, of his work’s indexicality.<sup>37</sup> Drum-scanning Hujar’s negative (with its language of light) allowed Schneider to translate the image into a digital file (with its binary language of ones and zeros) that could then be manipulated and printed. In refusing “to confuse the root cause of a thing with its essence,” Schneider took up what Benjamin refers to as “one of the most powerful and fruitful historical processes” (in this instance, the maturation of photography’s language) and embraced the possibilities afforded by the medium’s new technologies.<sup>38</sup> Schneider’s ambition to get at the poetics—rather than simply the hermeneutics—of Hujar’s prints led him away from analog to digital printing, for it was not merely *what* Hujar’s prints meant (their content) but *how* they meant (their syntax) that Schneider was after in his lab.

While Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” offers a compelling theoretical model for considering the larger

history of photography, the radical essence of his essay is here felt in its potential to inflect our understanding of the relationship between analog and digital printing. What Benjamin’s essay offers, in other words, is the opportunity to move away from a banal comparison between gelatin silver and pigmented ink and toward a more nuanced engagement with photography’s burgeoning language in a digital age. As Benjamin argues, “[T]ranslation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own.”<sup>39</sup> The rapid development of digital technologies afforded Schneider the possibility of posthumously translating Hujar’s works in a way that not only honored his intention for the image, but probed and expanded the potentials of pigmented ink, his new photographic language in the digital darkroom.

Though the material substrates of these two prints are different, their operations are very much the same. While the gelatin silver printer’s proof of *Will* was toned with selenium to stabilize and enrich the silver, the pigmented ink printer’s proof, made from scanning Hujar’s negative two decades later, was made slightly denser in tone through manipulating the digital file. Both prints call attention to the soft highlights in the folds of *Will*’s fleshy body and the crisp focus of his face, which he turns slightly away from Hujar’s lens. Unlike some of Hujar’s other portraits, there are no harsh tones in his photograph of *Will*, only the revelation of a gentle and dignified



disposition meant to reassure and comfort those closest to him in the wake of loss.

After he was diagnosed with HIV, Hujar closed the door to his studio's darkroom, leaving behind a store of unused printing paper and allowing his chemicals to evaporate in their processing trays. Following Hujar's death, Wojnarowicz, the artist's close friend, mentee, and, for a brief period, lover, moved into Hujar's sparse loft, where he lived until his own death from AIDS-related complications in 1992.<sup>40</sup> It was in Hujar's darkroom that Wojnarowicz printed his first 20 × 24 inch unique set of the *Sex Series*, a work that explores sexuality and the politics of silence at the height of America's AIDS crisis.

The processes Schneider undertook to edition Wojnarowicz's *Sex Series* differed conceptually and physically from those needed to edition Hujar's portrait of Will. While Hujar had taught both Schneider and Wojnarowicz a language of photography that was rooted in the ability to construct and read a print's narrative through its tonalities, Wojnarowicz would take the notion of a photographic language one step further in his artistic practice. Writing that he felt himself to be "a prisoner of language that doesn't have a letter or a sign or gesture that approximates what I'm sensing," Wojnarowicz crafted a complex visual syntax that built upon ideas he had tried to express in his literary work.<sup>41</sup> In addition to constructing a photographic language that can be read iconographically, Wojnarowicz also included texts in his photographs and worked in series, aspects that will enter into and inflect our consideration of Schneider's translation of this artist's work.<sup>42</sup>

### DAVID WOJNAROWICZ, *SEX SERIES*

Wojnarowicz is perhaps best known for the works he produced throughout the 1980s and early '90s that address, either directly or obliquely, America's AIDS epidemic. A prolific writer and artist, his essays, films, paintings, and prints speak to the urgency of art-making and political action during a period in which America's gay community was under siege. "I feel that I'm caught in the invisible arms of a government in a country slowly dying beyond our grasp," the artist wrote at the height of the epidemic.<sup>43</sup> Though Wojnarowicz had been using photographs in his paintings for years, creatively collaging both found and original photos as well as images from contact sheets into his works, it was not until 1988, after he had moved into Hujar's apartment and inherited his intact darkroom, that he became serious about printing his own work.<sup>44</sup> "When Peter died in 1987," Schneider recalled in a brief piece written for *Aperture*, "David immediately began using his darkroom. . . . It was only after Peter's death that David made photographs as objects for the wall, as works of art in and of themselves."<sup>45</sup>

Among the first of these images is Wojnarowicz's now-iconic *Untitled (Buffalo)* (Fig. 9), a work that in its quiet imaging of free-falling symbols of Americana, speaks to both the plight of a community being driven to destruction and, implicitly, the policies that were driving them there. The image demonstrates Wojnarowicz's ability to create complex meaning from seemingly banal subject matter—in this instance, a diorama at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., meant to teach children a sanitized history of a culture's lost way of life. Initially intended to be included among other images in a work he was creating in memory of Paul Thek, Wojnarowicz instead decided to allow this photograph to stand on its own, printing a small edition of five 16 × 20 inch prints in Hujar's darkroom.<sup>46</sup> Despite their similar tonal range, Wojnarowicz's photograph of buffalo throwing themselves off a cliff is vastly different from Hujar's delicately sweet portrait of Will.<sup>47</sup> While Hujar's animal portraits were meant to serve as a reminder of himself for his friends, loved ones, and caregivers, Wojnarowicz's buffalo were intended as a pointed commentary on the violence of Hujar's death and the AIDS crisis more broadly. "Even a tiny charcoal scratching done as a gesture to mark a person's response to this epidemic means whole worlds to me if it is hung in public," the artist wrote in *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*.<sup>48</sup> In place of a charcoal mark, we find a faint self-portrait of the artist in this print. Formed by Wojnarowicz's own reflection in the glass that once separated him from the museum's diorama, the artist's face can be seen hovering in the clouds above the overturned buffalo at center. The intentional inclusion of himself in this photograph is a small gesture, but one that Schneider noticed and worked diligently in the darkroom to keep. Schneider's recognition that the political and affective implications of this image would have been drastically altered had Wojnarowicz's self-portrait been lost in translation is telling of both his relationship with the artist and intimate understanding of Wojnarowicz's work.<sup>49</sup> In this rosy-hued print, the artist appears disembodied but ever present, helpless to stop the devastating events occurring below him but refusing to relinquish his role as a witness to their history.

In an essay Wojnarowicz titled "Postcards from America: X Rays from Hell," the 36-year-old artist wrote:

I found that, after witnessing Peter Hujar's death on November 26, 1987, and after my recent diagnosis, I tend to dismantle and discard any and all kinds of spiritual and psychic and physical words or concepts designed to make sense of the external world or designed to give momentary comfort. It's like stripping the body of flesh in order to see the skeleton, the structure. I want to know what the structure of all this is in the way only I can know it.<sup>50</sup>



Fig. 9  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled (Buffalo)*, 1988–89. Gelatin silver print, 50.5 × 60.8 cm (19<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.143.

For Wojnarowicz, this metaphorical “stripping” of both one’s body and the body politic was symbolized through the aesthetic of the X-ray and engendered through the making public of private realities, which, he argued, would disintegrate the notion of a “general public” from which he was excluded and allow for “an examination of its foundations.”<sup>51</sup> “To turn our private grief for the loss of friends, family, lovers and strangers into something public would serve as another dismantling tool,” he wrote. “It would dispel the notion that this virus has a sexual orientation or a moral code. It would nullify the belief that the government and medical community has done very much to ease the spread or advancement of this disease.”<sup>52</sup>

Wojnarowicz's *Sex Series* employs the aesthetic of medical X-rays to examine and critique the physical and psychological violence of AIDS, the American government, and society at large (Figs. 10–17). When read iconographically, the series as a whole comes to represent Wojnarowicz's sophisticated way of building meaning in his works. In his use of a train, the principal image in the photomontage considered at length here, Wojnarowicz sought to confront those in America's rural communities who believed themselves impervious to an illness they thought thrived only in major cities (see Fig. 10).<sup>53</sup> Speaking about this particular print, Wojnarowicz asserted that the train's “impending collision” with the cluster of magnified blood cells at lower left was intended as a metaphor “for [his] own diagnosis and compressed

Fig. 10  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.1.

Fig. 11  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.2.

Fig. 12  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.3.

Fig. 13  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.4.





Last night I took a man home from the subway where he had been standing against a wall in the graffiti-covered car in black cowboy boots light jeans and a shirt unbuttoned to the third button and sleeves rolled up to reveal a workman's arse and a couple of blue ink tattoos and when we arrived back at my place I sat on my bed and loosened his trousers with my teeth while pulling apart each button on his shirt with my fingers and I slid my hands beneath the edge of his T-shirt and let my hands slide over his hard and warm belly and as his T-shirt rode up my arms with that motion there were two birds revealed tattooed in blue ink flying the distances of his chest and my tongue moved back and forth tracing wet lines across his belly and I slowly stood up and moved my tongue over his pale sides as I lifted his T-shirt above his head and I could feel the smell of his undershorts on my face rose up towards them my tongue taking in the taste and then he laid me down on the bed and removed my shoes and pants while I played with his hard dick through his pants and he bent and licked the inside of my legs and thighs and under my balls and then laid on top of me pulling my arms up and around his neck and he kissed behind my ears and licked across my throat and across my face and down the bridge of my nose "Doesn't your shirt hurt but his warm tongue in and I have the secondary stages of AIDS and the best of the T.V. who looks like he has a potato for a head is telling me and the rest of the country that I must suppress my sexuality "be truthful about me in words that makes me sound like an insect "carrier" "infected" "see and hear" pictures or films of me I am always bedridden and alone and he is always smiling and he says I must suppress my sexuality, what does he mean by "suppress" whether I am homosexual or heterosexual, whether I have AIDS or not.

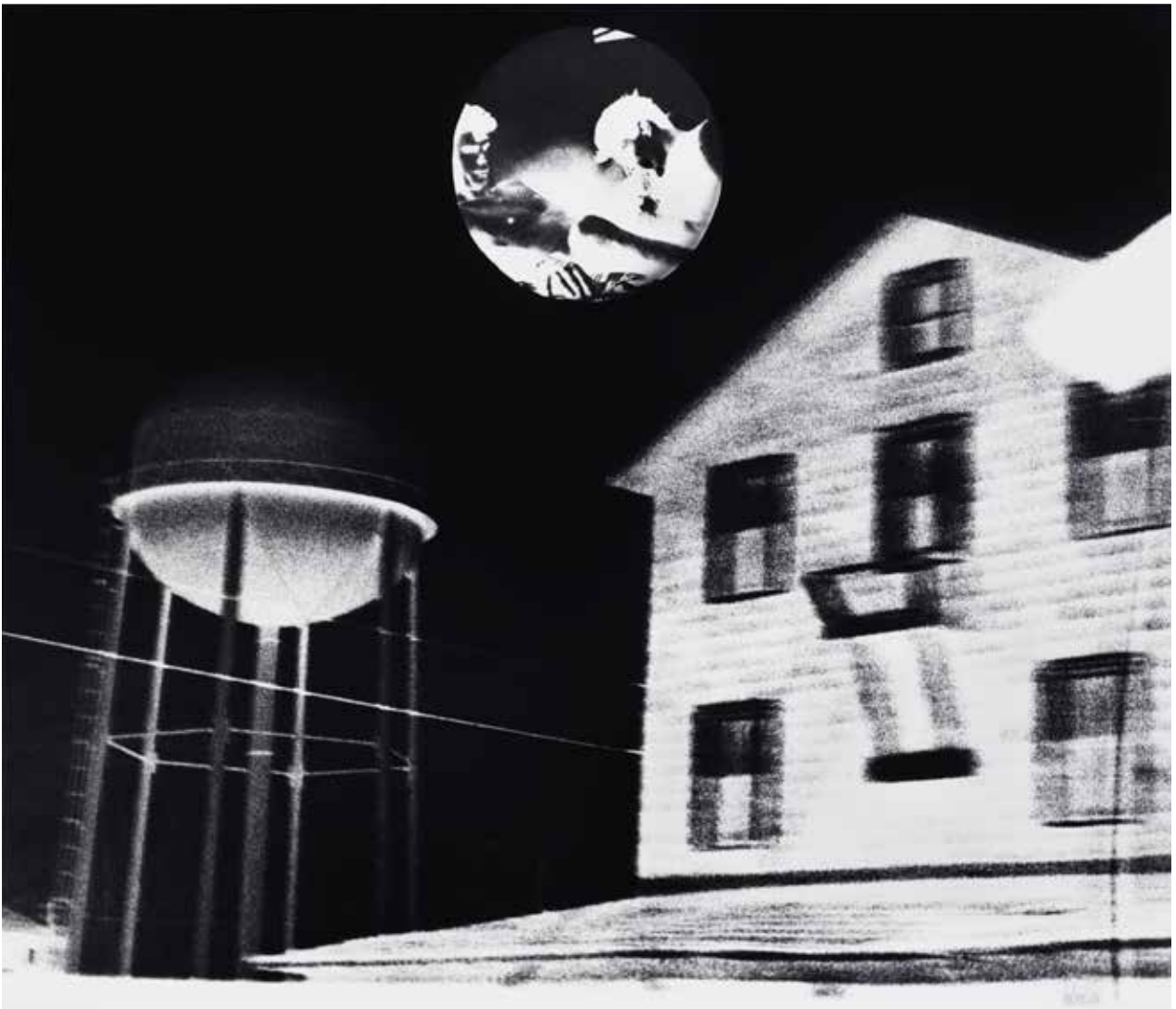
The man on the T.V. is also the man in the newspapers, he has a respectable head, one day he can be a man and on another day he can be a worm, he can be the face of a politician or the face of a doctor or the face of a religious scientist or the face of a health-care professional or the face of a person with a manlike tattoo on his heart, and each and every one of those faces and they are concerned for you because of my existence, and it is I who he takes on the face of a family man who wants to protect his children because I am his child and I have AIDS and I don't think having AIDS is something heavy, it is the use of AIDS as a weapon to enforce the conservative agenda that is what is heavy, homosexuality and intravenous drug users are expendable in this society and AIDS is treated in the same way that homosexuals and drug-users are and that is why there has been this legal and social murder on a daily basis.



For most people with AIDS in this country their only alternative to the highly toxic AZT is the possibility of getting into a government drug company sponsored drug trial - men's names are excluded from these trials for an unspecified period, 75% of men with AIDS manage to get into these drug trials. Lesbians are completely excluded and even the government's statistics on AIDS will not recognize lesbians as either victims or survivors of the disease of AIDS. Public Health, Elmsler, Hallam and other people of color are excluded from these drug trials. The drug companies insist that in order to be eligible for inclusion in the drug trials one must have a private physician who can monitor the results of the drug you take. This automatically excludes the poor or those on welfare since their physicians usually follow along in clinics where the doctors are overworked. In this sense there only white middle class men have some chance of receiving drugs for the treatment of AIDS if they are unable to handle the toxicity of AZT. How in God's name poor minorities are unable to get a diagnosis of AIDS from their doctors because if given a diagnosis their health care have to be more available to them in the event of severe illness such as P.C.P., pneumonia, a poor person with P.C.P. needs a good chance of a clinic doctor telling them they only have one 10% or better given ineffective medications and tend to come back later if it doesn't improve. Obviously this means they will die a short time later if they go to the hotel they live in or in the streets.

Homeless men or women are not diagnosed even though city statistics nationwide there are between five and ten thousand homeless people with AIDS living on the city streets or in shelters where they are susceptible to the more than 200 reportable infectious agents with AIDS and not just P.T.B. and pneumonia is common in the shelter system. Shelter doctors are likely to perpetuate and disperse homeless people with AIDS whom hospitals are overwhelmed with the beds are saved for people with insurance or money. Intravenous drug users have a high rate of death. The statistics for the most sickening, drug-induced, pneumonia is not in the books; in this sense a drug addict who has AIDS has to live with the best and those who die with AIDS are not counted. There is no help for the drug trials. It has been said that the AZT is being administered to people with AIDS in the streets, drug users who were probably given some small amount of money before they die. The medical community through an enormous amount of bureaucratic middle class and the elderly communities. They still see the biomedical community as the only solution. They need to be at responsive toward all communities and safe and healthy in this is necessary. There are large percentages of men who engage in homosexual activity and because they think they are safe or not killed by a way they don't consider themselves homosexual. As although they are better in their behavior, but without much the health in fact have been allowed to remain open and city health officials still see a community that continues to get AIDS.

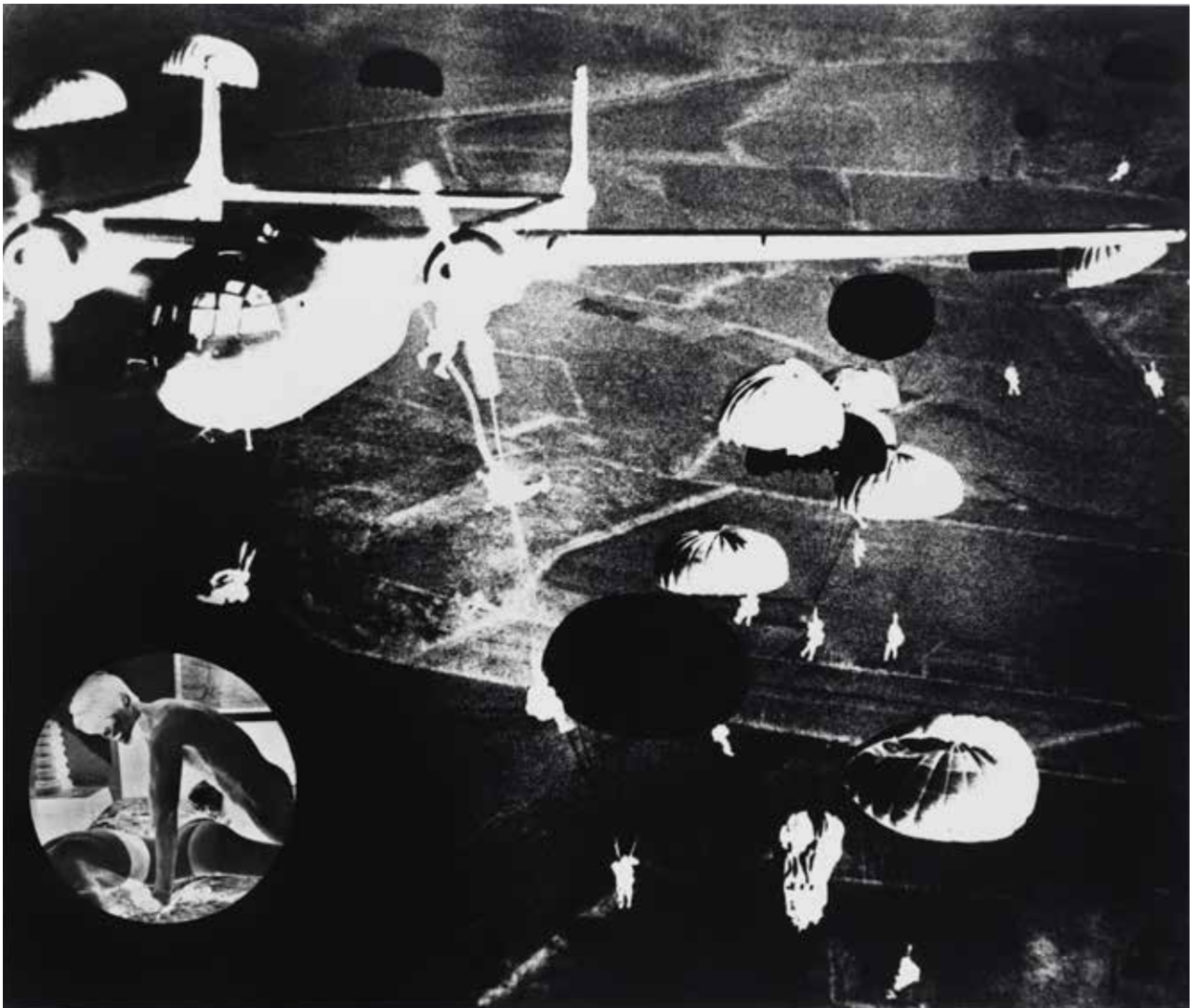












sense of mortality.<sup>54</sup> As the train barrels toward both the infected cells and the viewer, however, its collision and the viruses' imminent spread affirm the fact that the disease is everyone's concern. Above the clinical image of blood cells at left is an inset of a photograph Wojnarowicz himself took of nonviolent demonstrators being assailed by police while protesting the FDA's fatally slow release of medications. As two men engage in oral sex in the upper right corner of this print (sourced from Hujar's collection of pornography), a newspaper clipping directly beneath them relates the beating and stabbing of two men on Manhattan's Upper West Side who were suspected of being gay.<sup>55</sup> Through its aesthetic, imagery, and text, this photomontage from the *Sex Series* celebrates sexuality without sentiment, addresses the disease without guilt, and breaks the silence surrounding an epidemic that had, by 1990, killed more than 100,000 Americans.<sup>56</sup>

The Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection includes all eight of Wojnarowicz's *Sex Series* printer's proofs, each remarkable in its own way for the complexity of its making. Wojnarowicz created the initial 20 × 24 inch prints for this series by montaging a combination of color slides and negatives in the darkroom with a single enlarger, a herculean task that necessitated a number of intricate visual calculations.<sup>57</sup> Making slides of images that he wanted to appear inverted in the final prints and using negatives for images that he wanted to print out positive, Wojnarowicz worked through a carefully planned sequence of exposures in order to create these montages. For the first, the artist began by hand-making masks for each of the smaller images that he wanted to embed within his main image of the moving train. While there are many different types of masking that one can do in the darkroom, masks are, in general, used to selectively protect or expose the light-sensitive photographic paper from or to the light produced by the enlarger. Adept at stenciling, a technique he had experimented with extensively in his earlier works in other media, Wojnarowicz had learned

through conversations with his close confidant and collaborator Marguerite Van Cook that he could create a circular-shaped inset by crafting a new negative holder for his darkroom's enlarger.<sup>58</sup> After printing the image of the train, holding back light from the sections in which he wanted to insert his smaller images, Wojnarowicz then would have exposed the images for the vignettes in the areas he had initially kept free of light. At some point in his performance, Wojnarowicz exposed the text hovering in the sky above the mountains in the background, most likely using a transparency or slide. For areas in which the text is bright white, the transparencies would have been laid on the photographic paper before the image was exposed, remaining there for the duration of the printing process. Where the text is darker, the transparency was most likely laid down after Wojnarowicz exposed the work's principal image.

Because all eight of the *Sex Series* prints had been montaged in the darkroom, no negatives existed for the prints from which reproductions could be made. Each of the eight prints in the initial *Sex Series* was entirely unique. In comparison to Hujar's *Will*, this is a case in which an original did exist, or at least, in which there was a more obvious or accessible correlation between the initial 20 × 24 inch montaged prints and (what would become) their 16 × 20 inch counterparts. Under pressure to relinquish the unique set and knowing how important these works were, Wojnarowicz came to Schneider to see if it might be possible for him not simply to reproduce, but to translate them.<sup>59</sup> Whether or not the *Sex Series* could be reproduced was not necessarily the artist's concern, as any lab in Manhattan could have undertaken what would have amounted to copy work.<sup>60</sup> Wojnarowicz knew, however, that there was more to re-creating a print than simply reproducing its likeness. What he needed to be actualized was his *intention*, something that could easily be lost if the smallest detail was carelessly allowed to fall away. (Recall the importance of his spectral self-portrait in his photograph of the falling buffalo.) "One of the things that happened after my diagnosis is this feeling that this might be the last work I do," Wojnarowicz stated in an interview with Sylvère Lotringer in April 1989.<sup>61</sup> His attempts at "trying to focus everything and channel it into this square, or into this photograph, or into this thing," at working "to put that intention into a pictorial frame with all the anger, all the emotions, all the thoughts," is what motivated the artist's feverish work in his studio during this period.<sup>62</sup>

Wojnarowicz's concern that the meaning of his works be successfully carried through in their reproductions can be detected in the adamancy with which he defended his work when grossly misrepresented. In 1989, the sexual imagery from the upper right corner of the *Sex Series* print featuring the train was enlarged and reproduced out of context by the American Family Association in a pamphlet that sought to discredit the National Endowment for

Fig. 14  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.5.

Fig. 15  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.6.

Fig. 16  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.7.

Fig. 17  
David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled*, from the *Sex Series*, 1989. Gelatin silver print, 40.6 × 50.8 cm (16 × 20 in.). Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection, partial gift, and partial purchase through the Margaret Fisher Fund, 2016.142.8.



Fig. 18  
 American Family Association, "Your Tax Dollars Helped Pay for These 'Works of Art,'" 1990. Offset flyer, 35.6 x 21.6 cm (14 x 8 1/2 in.). Courtesy Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University.

the Arts (Fig. 18). "Your Tax Dollars Helped Pay for These 'Works of Art,'" the Christian fundamentalist organization declared in the pamphlet's title. Incensed that his work had been cannibalized and used for these purposes, Wojnarowicz took Reverend Donald E. Wildmon to court over his violation of the New York State Artist's Authorship Act.<sup>63</sup> During his testimony, Wojnarowicz was asked to explain why he thought the AFA pamphlet had damaged his reputation as an artist. He replied, "I think, in looking at it, it clearly attempts to portray my work as being nothing more than banal pornography. I think that through the use of selective editing, it essentially stripped all my work of its artistic and political content and the remaining images to me are basically empty, they do have a meaning, but not the sort of meaning that I'm interested in exploring in my work."<sup>64</sup>

Wojnarowicz's argument in court hinged on his belief that the images and fragments of his montages acted like individual words that, when removed from their original contexts, were emptied of his intention and made to mean something else. In his discussion of Benjamin's essay on translation, literary theorist Paul de Man argues that our experience of the "materiality of the letter" occurs through a similar disarticulation of meaning—a sentence becomes words, which themselves become syllables, which in turn become meaningless letters.<sup>65</sup> Though letters come together to form a word, de Man writes, the word itself (and its meaning) is not present in the individual components that comprise it.<sup>66</sup> De Man's consideration of language and the slippage of meaning is of interest here given Wojnarowicz's own description of his photographic practice: "To me, photographs are like words," Wojnarowicz wrote in *Close to the Knives*.<sup>67</sup> "I generally will place many photographs together or print them one inside the other in order to construct a free-floating sentence that speaks about the world I witness."<sup>68</sup> If Reverend Wildmon had intentionally dismantled the meaning of Wojnarowicz's works on a macro level, pulling entire images out of context for his bigoted pamphlet, Schneider would work to counter this aggressive disarticulation by, quite literally, attending to the individual letters that threatened to melt into these prints' deep shadows. In the lab, Schneider sought to translate Wojnarowicz's political and aesthetic intent for his series by considering both the texts that the artist had carefully stenciled into these images and their photographic equivalent: tonalities.

Schneider set to work editioning this series of eight individually montaged prints within a year of Wojnarowicz beginning the process of taking Reverend Wildmon to court for decontextualizing and misrepresenting his work. That same year, funding for the second exhibition in which four of the *Sex Series* prints were to be shown—Nan Goldin's *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* at Artists Space—was being threatened by a nervously run NEA.<sup>69</sup> Distilling and mobilizing Wojnarowicz's political intention for each of his pieces seemed more important than ever during this heightened period of controversy. Given the artist's relationship with Schneider and Erdman, it is no surprise that he turned to their lab to help him undertake this task. In the lab, Schneider used an 8 × 10 studio camera to create copy negatives for Wojnarowicz's original prints, from which he could then make new gelatin silver reproductions. Resizing Wojnarowicz's 20 × 24 inch prints to 16 × 20 inches posed innumerable challenges, as the process skewed the dimensions of the vignettes and threatened to render illegible the texts that the artist had intentionally included. In order to mitigate tonal distortions in each of the prints, Schneider made individual shadow masks for each of the images, which he then sandwiched with the negatives to create the exposures.<sup>70</sup> Making painstaking adjustments that would maximize details in

certain shadows while controlling highlights in others, Schneider heavily manipulated his versions of these works in the darkroom, exaggerating various aspects in order to build a tonal range specific to each print.

For example, for the text above the mountains in the background of the work with the moving train, Schneider made a shadow mask that allowed parts of the wording to fade slightly into black while retaining information in the lettering that rests in deep shadow. Because the text had been made even smaller in the process of resizing the image, Schneider was forced to try to retrieve information that had been submerged in Wojnarowicz's original print in order for some of the words to remain legible. This act brings to mind Benjamin's description of a successful translation's integral aspect, namely, the translator's reconciliation between fidelity and freedom.<sup>71</sup> "Unlike a work of literature," Benjamin writes, "translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one."<sup>72</sup> While a straight, literal print from the negative Schneider had created from Wojnarowicz's original montaged work may have produced a seemingly adequate reproduction, such a print would have failed as a translation. Not only would the syntax of the image have been lost—the subtlety of tones that had to be rebuilt into the image in the darkroom—but the text Wojnarowicz had specifically included would have been rendered illegible. "I have Aids and I don't think that that is something heavy," reads the sentence in the upper right corner of this particular print, "it is the use of Aids as a weapon to enforce the conservative agenda that is heavy." Fidelity to the political truth that Wojnarowicz had wanted to impart was here dependent on Schneider's fidelity to the materiality of the letter. In many ways, fighting for these details in the darkroom was consonant with fighting against the silencing of an entire community that was, as the text in this print states, considered "expendable."

As their printer, Schneider aimed to catalyze the visions of Hujar and Wojnarowicz in his lab, a task that brought a small measure of justice to friends whose lives had been tragically curtailed by a disease the government had largely chosen to ignore. "It is exhausting, living in a population where people don't speak up if what they witness doesn't directly threaten them," Wojnarowicz wrote in the year leading up to his death.<sup>73</sup> Speaking to the violence perpetrated against queer bodies while also imparting value to the lives of those lost, Hujar's *Will* and Wojnarowicz's *Sex Series*, nearly three decades after their initial making, serve as monuments to the AIDS crisis and a reminder of the horrors that can be afflicted through censorship and apathy. In addition to delineating the urgency of making in the wake of both personal and material loss, these two case studies highlight

the complexities of printing and the various modes of translation Schneider mobilized in his task as a printer. Considering the task of Schneider/Erdman, Inc., as analogous to that of a translator affords us the opportunity to reevaluate the field—to bring to light photography’s creative and collaborative histories of making and to consider the medium’s social, material, and political histories anew. Situated “midway between poetry and doctrine,” the task of the translator may be “less sharply defined,” Benjamin tells us, “but it leaves no less of a mark on history.”<sup>74</sup>

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- 1 Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson, foreword to *The Meaning of Photography*, ed. Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008), xi.
- 2 Anne McCauley writes that “the success of photography within humanistic studies and its simultaneous omnipresence within art schools and museums hinge on the same paradoxical assumption: that one forgets about the technologies needed to actually make a picture but remembers that the photograph is indexical and thus always documentary. Something has been gained: Many scholars are looking closely at photographs and thinking about how they shape our view of the world. But something has been lost: Too many take them as given, as mental constructs removed from labor.” See Anne McCauley, “Overexposure: Thoughts on the Triumphs of Photography,” in *ibid.*, 162.
- 3 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Second Version,” in *Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al., ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 20. For more on the notion of tacit knowledge, see Jennifer Quick’s essay in this volume.
- 4 This is not to say that Benjamin was not interested in photography’s technological histories. See, for example, his “Little History of Photography,” in Jennings, Doherty, and Levin, *Walter Benjamin*, 274–98.
- 5 Joanna Sassoon looks to Walter Benjamin’s discussion of translation in relation to photography in her essay “Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction,” in *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (New York: Routledge, 2004), 186–202. Though our concerns are different—she considers the broader implications of the institutional digitization of photographic collections while my interests lie in the task of the printer and the collaborative practice of making—I would be remiss not to cite her here.
- 6 Though this essay addresses works created by only two of the many artists represented in the Schneider/Erdman Printer’s Proof Collection, it is intended to serve as a teaser for the exhibition’s accompanying digital resource, which is similarly focused on processes of making. In addition to the works discussed here, the Harvard Art Museums’ online Special Collection features case studies on photographs by Lisette Model, Richard Avedon, Robert Gober, Gilles Peress, and John Schabel (among others), as well as interviews with Schneider and those whose work he printed.
- 7 Hujar’s influence during his lifetime and in the years following his death has only recently begun to receive more widespread recognition. See Stephen Koch, “Peter Hujar and the Radiance of Unknowing,” *Double Take* 4 (1988): 68–75; and the most recent publication on Hujar’s life and work, Joel Smith, ed., *Peter Hujar: Speed of Life* (New York: Aperture, 2017).
- 8 See Sigmund Freud, “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II),” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12, trans. James Strachey, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), 147–56; and Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, trans. James Strachey, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), 243–58. My reference to Freud and consideration of the lab as a place for working through mourning derives from conversations with Margaret and Joseph Koerner on the studio practices of William Kentridge.
- 9 For more detailed information on the meetings and relationships of Hujar, Schneider, Erdman, and Wojnarowicz, see Cynthia Carr, *Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 187–93.
- 10 In her discussion of Wojnarowicz’s use of photography in his work, Lucy Lippard quotes the artist as saying that Hujar had helped him develop “an eye for printing and the possibilities in the print.” Cynthia Carr quotes Schneider as saying that working with Hujar was how he “learned to see.” See Lucy R. Lippard, “Passenger on the Shadows,” in *David Wojnarowicz: Brush Fires in the Social Landscape*, ed. Melissa Harris (New York: Aperture, 2015), 23; and *ibid.*, 188–89.
- 11 Thanks to the Peter Hujar Archive for providing access to a recorded interview in which Schneider speaks to these two particular prints.
- 12 Hripsimé Visser, “The Ambiguity of the Masquerade,” in *Peter Hujar: A Retrospective*, ed. Urs Staghel and Hripsimé Visser (New York: Scalo Publishers, 1994), 15.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Only the gelatin silver printer’s proof of Hujar’s *Will* is reproduced here, as the nuances between it and the posthumously made pigmented ink printer’s proof of the same image are difficult to read in reproduction. Images of the gelatin silver and pigmented ink printer’s proofs of *Will* can be found on the museums’ website, and both prints can be requested to be viewed in person, by appointment, in the Harvard Art Museums’ Art Study Center.
- 15 Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 70. For a more thorough consideration of the “original” as it relates to the larger history of photography, see Jennifer Quick’s essay in this volume.
- 16 Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Second Version,” 24–25.
- 17 The following information regarding Hujar’s process is based on conversations that Schneider and the author had between October 2016 and May 2017.
- 18 Schneider had different working relationships with each of the photographers for whom he printed. Hujar’s practice and Schneider’s collaboration with him differed, for example, from his relationship with Avedon, who wanted each of his prints to be “identical” and who sent intricately diagrammed prints to the lab to aid in this endeavor. Schneider openly admitted that producing identical prints was impossible in a physical practice that hinged on seconds and required the delicate balancing of chemicals. For more information on Schneider’s work with Avedon, see the case study on Avedon’s portrait of John Lennon in the accompanying online resource, available at <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/special-collections>. For more information on Schneider’s notion of a “functioning” print, see his piece on printing for Hujar in this volume.
- 19 Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Second Version,” 24–25.
- 20 This is something that Schneider learned from conversations with Hujar and through working with Lisette Model as her printer later in her life. For more information on Schneider’s relationship with Model, see the case study dedicated to her photograph *Fashion Show, Hotel Pierre* in the accompanying online resource.
- 21 Burning and dodging are imperative to the process of printing in that they allow a printer to build greater tonal range or contrast into what might otherwise be a flatter image. See the glossary in this volume for a more thorough discussion of these techniques.
- 22 Though the paper was not officially discontinued by Agfa until 2001, the failures of the paper’s new formula reverberated throughout the photographic community years before then. Indeed, in memoriams to the paper were being written in *American Photo* as early as 1995. For more information, see “Agfa Discontinues Portriga,” *Photo Trade News Magazine* 65 (6) (June 1, 2001); and Frank Van Riper, “Agfa and the Fine Art Paper Chase,” *The Washington Post*, October 14, 1994. Schneider discusses Hujar and Portriga in greater detail in his interview with Penley Knipe in this volume. For more information on this and other photographic printing papers, see the glossary.
- 23 Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” 71.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 25 See Schneider’s piece on printing for Hujar in this volume.
- 26 In his interview with Knipe, Schneider mentions that Portriga Rapid was Hujar’s “favorite paper with his later prints.”
- 27 The Schneider/Erdman Printer’s Proof Collection contains a letter that Sally Mann wrote to Schneider on the back of two prints regarding the loss of Agfa Portriga Rapid and her struggles with other papers to achieve a similar aesthetic. For more information, see Knipe’s interview with Schneider in this volume.
- 28 For a detailed discussion of photographic papers in particular, see Paul Messier, “Image Isn’t Everything: Revealing Affinities across Collections through the Language of the Photographic Print,” published as part of the Museum of Modern Art’s online project *Object:Photo. Modern Photographs: The Thomas Walther Collection 1909–1949*, available at <https://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/assets/essays/Messier.pdf>.

- 29  
Though the differences in tonalities will appear in reproduction here, it is important to note that the textures, weights, and sheens of these two black and white printing papers also differ. These and other prints in the Schneider/ Erdman Printer's Proof Collection are available to view in person, by appointment, in the Harvard Art Museums' Art Study Center. For more information on Ilford Galerie and Agfa Portrigras Rapid, see the glossary in this volume.
- 30  
See Schneider on printing for Hujar in this volume.
- 31  
Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 75.
- 32  
Though Schneider could have printed Hujar's images on any black and white paper he wanted, he refused to take such flagrant license with his mentor's work. In this way, he escapes the pitfalls described by Benjamin, who reminds us of how appallingly literature and language are affected "by the unrestrained license of bad translators." *Ibid.*, 78.
- 33  
*Ibid.*, 76.
- 34  
*Ibid.*, 78. Benjamin writes: "Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel."
- 35  
See Shimon Sandbank, "The Translator's Impossible Task: Variations on Walter Benjamin," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 13 (2) (June 2015): 217; and *ibid.*, 80.
- 36  
Benjamin writes, "The intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, graphic; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational. For the great motif of integrating many tongues into one true language is at work." Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 76–77.
- 37  
Film served as the intermediary in the production of both the gelatin silver and the pigmented ink printer's proofs of *Will*.
- 38  
Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 73.
- 39  
*Ibid.*
- 40  
An authority on Wojnarowicz, Cynthia Carr writes about this period of his life in much greater detail in *Fire in the Belly*.
- 41  
David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 117.
- 42  
Schneider's task with the *Sex Series* moved beyond the translation of the intention of a single image (as in the task of printing *Will*) and toward the necessity of having to craft a cohesive narrative that would work across a larger group. Though I am able to address only one of the *Sex Series*' eight photomontages at length here, I make an effort to gesture toward the way in which this series operates semantically in its entirety. In addition to the complete *Sex Series*, the Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection contains a number of other works by Wojnarowicz that would provide a rich basis for research into his particular merging of photography and text. Among these is *When I Put My Hands on Your Body*, the last work Schneider printed for the artist before his death in 1992.
- 43  
Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 28.
- 44  
See Carr, *Fire in the Belly*, 403–6. For a more thorough discussion of the role of photography in Wojnarowicz's oeuvre, see Lippard, "Passenger on the Shadows."
- 45  
Gary Schneider, "Working with David Wojnarowicz," in Harris, *David Wojnarowicz*, 81.
- 46  
Carr, *Fire in the Belly*, 404–6. Thek was an American artist and, at one point, Hujar's lover (see p. 182 of Carr's book). The Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection includes 12 color prints of images that Hujar made in Thek's studio, as well as a number of Hujar's black and white portraits of him. For more information regarding the discovery of these images, see Matthew Israel, "Finding Thek's Tomb," *Art in America* 98 (10) (November 2010): 118–27.
- 47  
Though Schneider printed the initial 30 × 40 inch edition of *Untitled (Buffalo)*, the Schneider/Erdman Printer's Proof Collection contains the printer's proof for the later memorial edition of this work, created after Wojnarowicz's death. This particular print is printed on Guilbrom, a paper manufactured by the Paris-based company Guilleminot. Guilbrom (marketed as Brilliant in the United States) was a black and white photographic paper that Schneider, Erdman, and others had hoped would be able to replace Agfa Portrigras Rapid following its reformulations in the late 1980s. It is largely because of these two now-defunct paper's similarities that Hujar's gelatin silver printer's proof of *Will* and Wojnarowicz's photograph of falling buffalo share somewhat analogous warm, muddy tones. The additional soft rosy hue that permeates Wojnarowicz's image was created by Schneider's careful polytoning of the print in the darkroom.
- 48  
Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 122.
- 49  
In a short piece written for Aperture's *Brush Fires in the Social Landscape*, Schneider discusses printing the 30 × 40 inch edition of Wojnarowicz's *Untitled (Buffalo)*: "The wonderful thing about printing for David was that he really believed in the notion of collaboration. When I print, I see my part as being a catalyst for another artist's ideas. David wanted me to *reinvent* the work at the larger scale. I asked if I could use his elegant 16-by-20-inch print of *Untitled (Falling Buffalo)* (1988–9) as a guide when I was printing it at 30 × 40 inches, but he wouldn't let me. He said: 'Make another one in the best possible way.' I have had this kind of remarkable relationship with only a few other artists." Schneider, "Working with David Wojnarowicz," 81.
- 50  
David Wojnarowicz, "Postcards from America: X Rays from Hell," republished in Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 116.
- 51  
*Ibid.*, 121.
- 52  
*Ibid.*
- 53  
Wojnarowicz writes: "This is a country of trains, planes, and automobiles. AIDS is accelerating in small towns and small cities because the inhabitants of those places believe a number of things: one. That this virus has a sexual orientation and a moral code. two. That the virus obeys borders and stays within large urban centers. three. That if the person you fuck is sweet and kind and sexy, they could not possibly have AIDS or the HIV virus. four. That only wild or reckless people get this disease." Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 133–34.
- 54  
Wojnarowicz addresses this particular print in his 1989 court testimony against Reverend Donald E. Wildmon and the American Family Association, discussed in more detail later in this essay. An edited transcript of his testimony can be found in Giancarlo Ambrosino, ed., *David Wojnarowicz: A Definitive History of Five or Six Years on the Lower East Side* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 213–25.
- 55  
The article that Wojnarowicz used was written by Constance L. Hays and titled "2 Men Beaten by 6 Youths Yelling 'Fags.'" It appeared in *The New York Times* on August 24, 1988, and can be read in its entirety at <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/08/24/nyregion/2-men-beaten-by-6-youths-yelling-fags.html>.
- 56  
Annual reports from the CDC specify 100,813 American deaths from AIDS-related illnesses between 1982 and 1990. It should be noted, however, that the CDC's yearly totals include only those deaths that were reported to the agency. The CDC's yearly HIV Surveillance Reports can be accessed online at <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/reports/hiv-surveillance.html>.
- 57  
The following discussion regarding Wojnarowicz's process of creating the *Sex Series* photomontages and Schneider's process of reproducing them is derived from a number of conversations that Schneider and the author had between January and May 2017.
- 58  
Carr writes that Wojnarowicz initially got the idea for using color slides with black and white printing paper from Van Cook, who told him "about a photo series she'd made by using color slides in the enlarger—a positive would become a negative, though the red light in the darkroom would knock out a certain portion of the light spectrum coming through the slide. So the prints would look like negatives but be a little 'off.'" Van Cook was a curator, filmmaker, and writer with whom Wojnarowicz closely collaborated on a range of projects. Along with her husband, James Romberger, she opened and ran the East Village's now-iconic Ground Zero Gallery. See Carr, *Fire in the Belly*, 408–9. See also Lucy R. Lippard, "Out of the Safety Zone," *Art in America* 78 (12) (December 1990): 130–39; and Barry Blinderman, "The Compression of Time: An Interview with David Wojnarowicz," in *David Wojnarowicz: Tongues of Flame*, ed. Barry Blinderman (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1990), 49–63.



See Carr, *Fire in the Belly*, 408–12. Schneider and Erdman were introduced to Wojnarowicz through Hujar and had been processing Wojnarowicz's film for him in exchange for the occasional work since 1984. When Wojnarowicz approached the couple with this series, the three decided that they would co-own the slightly smaller prints produced by the lab in exchange for the labor-intensive work that would go into making them. The collaboration resulted in an edition of prints co-owned by Wojnarowicz, Schneider/Erdman, and PPOW Gallery. The original contract and notes pertaining to making the prints are included in Schneider/Erdman's business records, now part of the Harvard Art Museums Archives.

See the glossary in this volume for more on copy prints.

Ambrosino, *David Wojnarowicz*, 189.

Ibid. Wojnarowicz wrote: "I joke and say that I feel I've taken out another six-month lease on this body of mine, on this vehicle of sound and motion, and every painting or photograph or film I make, I make with the sense that it may be the last thing I do and so I try to pull everything into the surface of that action. I work quickly now and feel there is no time for bullshit. Cut straight to the heart of the senses and map it out as clearly as tools and growth will allow." Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 109.

This case and the disputes that have collectively come to be referred to as the culture wars have been discussed in detail elsewhere. For a broader and more recent consideration of these debates, see Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). For more insight into Wojnarowicz's case in particular, see David Cole's contribution in Harris, *David Wojnarowicz*, 173–77.

Ambrosino, *David Wojnarowicz*, 223.

Paul de Man, "'Conclusions' on Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,' Messenger Lecture, Cornell University, March 4, 1983," trans. William D. Jewett, in *50 Years of Yale French Studies: A Commemorative Anthology, Part 2, 1980–1998* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), 30.

Ibid.

Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 144.

Ibid.

Wojnarowicz's *Sex Series* was first exhibited in his solo show *In the Shadow of Forward Motion*, which ran from February 3 to March 4, 1989, at PPOW. Four of the eight prints from the series were then shown in *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* from November 16, 1989 to January 6, 1990. Artists Space had received a \$10,000 grant from the NEA to help fund both the *Witnesses* exhibition and its catalogue. After learning of Wojnarowicz's essay and the content of the show, however, John Frohnmayer (chairman of the NEA) wrote to Susan Wyatt (executive director of Artists Space): "Given our recent review, and the current political climate, I believe that the use of Endowment funds to exhibit or publish this work is in violation of the spirit of the Congressional directive. . . . On this basis, I believe that the Endowment's funds may not be used to exhibit or publish this material. Therefore Artists Space should relinquish the Endowment's grant for the exhibition." Quoted in Carr, *Fire in the Belly*, 453. Carr writes at length about this period and Artists Space's struggle with the NEA in *Fire in the Belly*, 442–61.

For more information on the process of masking, see the accompanying online resource—in particular, the case study on Robert Gober's *Untitled, 2008*.

Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 79.

Ibid., 76.

Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*, 261.

Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 77.